

Dear Congressman Hoyer,

On behalf of the 125,000 members of the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers, I urge you to OPPOSE the constitutional balanced budget amendment (H.J. Res. 2) introduced by Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA). H.J. Res. 2 would prohibit federal outlays from exceeding receipts, require a three-fifths vote to increase the public debt limit, and direct the President to submit a balanced budget annually to Congress.

While it is important that our nation's leaders address our growing debt, a balanced budget amendment would force severe budget cuts to programs that will harm hardworking every Americans such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, or even allow federal courts to order Congress and the President to enact dramatic tax increases. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, if a balanced budget amendment were in place in 2019, when revenue are projected to be 16.5 percent of GDP, federal programs would have to be cut by an average of more than 25 percent. A balanced budget amendment would result in massive cuts to essential programs important to the numerous bus, transit, and railroad employees we represent.

The legislation would make it impossible to make the kind of public investments we need to improve on our nation's transportation infrastructure particularly for our our passenger rail and transit systems. In addition, a federal balanced budget amendment would not allow any flexibility to respond appropriately to sudden changes in the economy, natural disasters, or national security threats. Moreover, the requirement of a three-fifths vote to increase the debt ceiling would elevate the risk of a federal default that could raise interest rates and damage the U.S. economy.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote no on H.J. Res. 2 and any other balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Sincerely,

John Risch
National Legislative Director
SMART Transportation Division